

Deir Yassin: Inconvenient History

[Daniel McGowan](#)

The Massacre

There are many different accounts and interpretations of what happened on 9 April 1948 at Deir Yassin, a small village on the west side of Jerusalem. For ardent Zionists it was a battle at the beginning of Israel's War for Independence. For most historians (privately, in opinions they can no longer express without unacceptable professional consequences) it was a massacre of Arabs committed by dissident Jewish factions of the Irgun and the Stern Gang. For Palestinians it was the beginning of the *Nakba* or The Catastrophe, when they were stripped of 78 percent of historical Palestine. [\[1\]](#)

Despite these different interpretations, almost all will agree on the following:

- Deir Yassin was a village populated by about 750 Arabs located 3 km west of Jerusalem near the top of a hill accessible only by one road coming from the east.
- With about 120 men, the Jewish terrorist gangs known as The Irgun and the Stern Gang attacked Deir Yassin at 4 a.m. on 9 April 1948 in their first joint 'military operation'.
- Alerted by guards, the villagers from within their stone homes and with few weapons (including two machine guns) were able to kill four of the terrorists and wound thirty-six, bringing the attack to a standstill by late morning.
- The gangs then sought the help of soldiers from the Palmach, the elite fighters of the Haganah, or the main Jewish military force. These seventeen professional soldiers, using a 52-mm mortar, conquered the village within an hour.
- After the Palmach soldiers had left, the gangs went from house to house killing women, children, and old men.
- They paraded some of the Palestinian men through the streets of Jerusalem and then brought them back to the stone quarry on the south side of Deir Yassin. There they shot them all to death.
- The Irgun and the Stern Gang then herded the villagers who were unable to flee (down the mountain to the southwest toward Ein Karem) into the school and threatened to blow up the building with all the people inside.
- The bloodbath was finally ended when Jews from the neighboring settlement of Givat Shaul intervened, forcing the gangs to let the Palestinians out to flee to East Jerusalem.
- In the following two days the bodies of over a hundred Palestinian villagers were either thrown into cisterns or burned in the quarry.
- During the evening of 9 April at a tea and cookies party for the press, the leader of the Irgun bragged of having killed 254 Arabs. This number was reported in the *New York Times* on 10 and 13 April.

- Within a year, the homes of Palestinians at Deir Yassin were resettled by Jews, most of them from Romania. In 1951 the Israeli government moved them and created a mental hospital among the buildings in the center of Deir Yassin. It was called Gival Shaul Bet and later the Kfar Shaul Hospital.

'Remember Deir Yassin!' became the fear-provoking threat of Jews in their subsequent ethnic cleansing of over 800,000 inhabitants from 530 Arab villages. It also became the battle cry of Arabs in reprisal attacks, such as the massacre of the medical convoy at Mt. Scopus on 13 April 1948.



*Deir Yassin as seen from Yad Vashem; the village lies in the green trees to the right of the water tower.
Photo courtesy of Deir Yassin Remembered (<http://www.deiryassin.org/pictures.html>)*

Today's Battle over the Memory of Deir Yassin

Zionists often resist and belittle (deny) the idea of memorializing the victims of Deir Yassin because the truth about the massacre drives a stake into the heart of so many of their myths. For example,

- If you know that Deir Yassin was a vibrant Arab village, hundreds of years old, with the ruins of a monastery, located not far from the birthplace of John the Baptist, then you would also know that Palestine was not 'a land without people', a myth born with Zionism and still taught in schools today.
- If you know that all the inhabitants of Deir Yassin were either killed or driven out, that their possessions were plundered, that their homes were given to immigrating Jews, then you would

recognize these actions to be ethnic cleansing, no more, no less. The Arabs did not leave voluntarily, nor were they called out by the Mufti, or any other such nonsense.

- If you know that Deir Yassin was a small village with no soldiers, standing fast against 120 armed terrorists and ultimately defeated by 17 professional soldiers, then you might understand that the 1948 war was won by Israel to a large extent because it had more soldiers in Palestine and more arms than the combined Arab forces. The story of little David surrounded by six mighty Arab armies is another myth that dissolves when the facts are revealed.
- If you know that most of the dead at Deir Yassin were shot point blank, then the myths of 'purity of arms' (Israeli soldiers only draw blood when necessary), 'Tikkun Olam' (Jews strive to heal the world), 'a light unto Nations', and 'the Chosen People' lose luster and credibility.
- If you know the horror of Deir Yassin and the impact it had on the Palestinian people, you begin to recognize great hypocrisy. You begin to understand, for example, why Noam Chomsky refers to the Nobel Peace Prize laureate Elie Wiesel as a 'terrible fraud'. Wiesel, who is the icon of the Holocaust industry (a term coined by Norman Finkelstein), claims to be proud to have worked for the Irgun and refuses to apologize for what they did at Deir Yassin. Even as Wiesel pontificates that 'the opposite of love is not hate; it is indifference' he shows complete indifference to the death, destruction, and dehumanization of the Palestinians. Even as he demands that Poles, Rumanians, Austrians, and Germans apologize for what they or their parents did to Jews in the Nazi genocide, he steadfastly refuses to even acknowledge the murders and ethnic cleansing committed by those for whom he was working.

When Wiesel and virtually every American politician visit the most famous Holocaust institution at Yad Vashem, they look over the valley to the north and ignore the fact that they are looking directly at Deir Yassin. Mouthing the words 'Never forget!' and 'Hope lives when people remember', they hypocritically ignore the single most memorable tragedy in 20th century Palestinian history. That Jews shot innocent Palestinian men, women, and children, mutilated their bodies, threw them into cisterns, heaped others in piles and burned them over several days following the massacre is horrible enough. To build a Holocaust memorial within sight of this crime while totally denying it is not just inconvenient; it is unconscionable. To continue to show indifference towards Deir Yassin, while standing in front of it, is hateful.

- If you knew that Zionists founded the neighboring Jewish settlement of Givat Shaul in 1906, you would realize that the idea of building a purely Jewish state was born long before the Holocaust. Creating a Jewish state upon land where more than half of the population is not Jewish is wrong. It was wrong before the Holocaust and it is wrong today.
- If you know that most of the Jewish terrorists who attacked Deir Yassin were not Holocaust survivors, then you would understand that the Holocaust was not the *raison d'être* for the creation of a Jewish state, but rather the propellant for a movement that started in the 1880s. While the practice of 'pumping in' Jews to a new homeland may be questionable, 'pumping out' the indigenous population as was done at Deir Yassin is both immoral and heinous, even to many of the Zionists in whose name it was carried out. What Menachem Begin, leader of the Irgun and later Prime Minister of Israel and another Nobel Peace Prize laureate, called 'a

splendid act of conquest' is in fact what Martin Buber rightly called 'a black stain on the honor of the Jewish nation.'

Out of Darkness Comes a Ray of Hope

Perhaps the most important lesson gained from the remembrance of Deir Yassin is one rarely mentioned by historians—Zionist, Palestinian, revisionist, or other. And that lesson lies in the fact that the imminent massacre of the remaining women, children, and old men of Deir Yassin, who had been herded into the village school, was prevented by their neighbors, the Jewish settlers of Givat Shaul. It was these unarmed Jews who faced down the murderers of the Irgun and the Stern Gang and demanded that the remaining Palestinian lives be spared. The true humanity of these brave Jews finally outweighed the extreme Zionism that propelled the crimes earlier that day.

Long before the Holocaust, the Jews of Givat Shaul immigrated to Palestine to build a state for Jews only. They worked the land and built houses next to Deir Yassin. They fought with their neighbors, but also respected them and had even signed a non-aggression pact to which both villages adhered. Certainly they must have preferred to live only among Jews, but there was a limit (*Yesh G'vul*). Murdering, plundering, terrorizing, dehumanizing, and expelling the indigenous population were not and are not in keeping with the true spirit of Judaism, the Judaism of the prophets.

Such strategies may well have worked in America in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but they will not be allowed to work today, not in the Holy Land or historical Palestine between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. And who will oppose them? Many, and in the vanguard there will most certainly be Jews.

For every Zionist (Christian, Jewish, or otherwise) who promotes injustice against Palestinians, there will be a Jew who courageously fights against it. For every Alan Dershowitz, there will be a Lea Tsemel and a Felicia Langer. For every Elie Wiesel, there will be a Norman Finkelstein and a Marc Ellis. For every Meir Kahane, there will be a Rabbi Dovid Weiss and a Rabbi Dovid Feldman. For every Moshe Levinger, there will be a Rabbi John Rayner and a Rabbi Jeffrey Newman. For every Sidney Zion, there will be an Amy Goodman. For every Michael Bard there will be a Cheryl Rubenberg or an Ilan Pappé. For every Barbra Streisand, there will be a Yehudi Menuhin. For every Chuck Schumer and Joe Lieberman there will be Jewish politicians willing to represent the United States as honest and unbiased peacemakers. One day soon, such politicians will no longer make the visit to Yad Vashem without also visiting Deir Yassin and reflecting on the tragedy it represents to all of the people in historical Palestine. To date, not a single American politician has done that.

Jews have always been among the leaders in struggles for human rights. When Edmond Fleg (French poet, playwright, and essayist) says, 'I am a Jew because for Israel, humanity is not yet fully formed; humanity must perfect itself,' he does not mean perfection through murder, plunder, ethnic cleansing, apartheid walls, and targeted assassinations. Indeed, as many Jews already acknowledge, perfection is not achieved through the formation of a Jewish state on land where half the people are not Jews and where by the year 2020 two-thirds will not be Jews.

Jewish people have been implicated in crimes against Palestinian humanity at least since the massacre at Deir Yassin. To ignore this, while exhorting the whole world to "never forget" man's inhumanity to man, counters the message so dramatically portrayed in every Holocaust memorial from Los Angeles to

Berlin to Sydney and particularly in Jerusalem, where the message is repeated in view of the remains of those Palestinians massacred at Deir Yassin.

Not only are Jews more likely to lead in the struggle for human rights for Palestinians, they are more capable of doing so. The anti-Semitic tar brush, which is so often used to stifle legitimate criticism of Israel, does not stick so well when applied to Jews. And the epithet 'self-hater' is far less offensive or punishable by academic tribunals. When Lenni Brenner, Avi Shlaim, and even Rabbi Michael Lerner criticize Israel, it is hard to dismiss them as being anti-Semitic.

Because It Promotes Peace

In size and scope, the Nakba and the Holocaust cannot be compared; even though both ethnic cleansing and genocide are crimes against humanity, the latter is far greater than the former. Nevertheless, both are crimes and the ethnic cleansing, subjugation, depopulation, and dehumanization of the Palestinian people for over 60 years cannot be ignored simply because the Nazi genocide killed millions of Jews and maimed millions more.

Deir Yassin was not the only massacre, nor was it the largest. But it is the prime symbol of Palestinian suffering and displacement. Because there is no memorial at the scene, because Deir Yassin is not taught in Israeli schools, because Deir Yassin is deliberately flushed down the memory hole of Jews in Israel and in the Diaspora, Deir Yassin has become a symbol of Jewish Denial or Nakba Denial, as Ilan Pappé would say. Nakba Denial is no less painful to Palestinians than is Holocaust Denial to Jews.

For Jews to recognize Deir Yassin and for Palestinians to recognize the victimization of Jews in the Holocaust would be steps toward recognizing the humanity and suffering of both peoples. What better place for such mutual recognition than in Jerusalem and specifically at Yad Vashem and at Deir Yassin? What better place to share each other's pain and victimization? What better place to come 'out of the ashes' as Marc Ellis says in his book, *Israel and Palestine: Out of the Ashes*.

In the words of Deborah Macoby,

In remembering Deir Yassin, we remember that we have displaced and in many cases driven out an entire people in order to establish ourselves upon their stolen land - that we made our gain as a people out of another people's loss. In remembering Deir Yassin we remember that we have been guilty of atrocity. In remembering Deir Yassin, we recognize that we are still committing atrocities and are at the moment in the process of denying all justice to the Palestinian people, of crushing them as a people and thus destroying our own meaning as a people. In remembering Deir Yassin we remember ourselves and what we ought to represent. (Deir Yassin Commemoration, Chichester Cathedral, April 9, 2003)

The Role of Deir Yassin Remembered

Deir Yassin Remembered grew out of four proposals to shake off the negative image of Palestinians fomented in the western media; they were presented to Yasser Arafat in 1994 at a conference in Gaza. The Deir Yassin idea was simple and inexpensive: to work to build a memorial at Deir Yassin, and thereby resurrect what is arguably the single most important event in 20th century Palestinian history. It was seen as a '**single-bullet approach**' to humanizing a people and validating their history. The other three proposals were accepted and distributed to Arafat's advisers, but the Deir Yassin proposal was given back to me with the request, directly by President Arafat, 'Would you work on this for us?' followed by

the disingenuous comment by one of his aides, 'We really have no one able to do this project.' In fact, that was the polite way of saying, 'Given all the strains of the Intifada and the general reluctance of Palestinians to support national causes, at least financially, you will soon become discouraged and give up. And that is fine with us, because we in the Palestinian Authority, in being allowed to return from Tunis, have made a deal with the Israelis to ask for nothing behind the Green Line, and a memorial at Deir Yassin would clearly be behind the Green Line.'

Eighteen months later my daughter, Sahar Ghosheh (widow of the former Minister of Labor), and I traveled to Gaza and met with Suha Arafat and Ahmed Qurei, also known as Abu Ala. We described our progress and told them that *Deir Yassin Remembered* had been formed and was developing quite nicely. Sahar and I had put together a twenty-person Board, half of them Jews, half non-Jews; half of them men and half women. We were planning an international Deir Yassin conference to be held in El Bireh. We had developed an appropriate logo, the prickly *saber* (that stubborn little cactus that is all that remains of many destroyed Palestinian villages), and we had secured tax-exempt status to encourage contributions from supporters in America. We asked if the Palestinian Authority was willing to give us a grant or support in some other form.

To our great surprise, Abu Ala was neither impressed nor pleased. He said this was "inconvenient" and the wrong time for such a project and asked that we stop all work immediately. We told him that that was not the impression given to us by Yasser Arafat, both face-to-face and in writing. He assured us that he spoke for President Arafat and again asked us to desist. I told him that was no longer possible.

Since then we have held two international conferences. Marc Ellis, Saleh Abdel Jawad, Faisal Husseini, and I were the featured speakers at the first one, April 9, 1997, during a snowstorm in El Bireh. Both conferences were organized by our Jerusalem Director, Khairieh Abu Shusheh, a tireless Palestinian grade-school teacher who also has led a march to Deir Yassin every April for many years. (Although Sahar lives in Ramallah only 12 miles away, she has been unable to attend these because she does not have a permit to enter Jerusalem.) The marches themselves require lengthy permits, which have been secured for us by the well-known defense lawyer, Lea Tsemel, an early supporter and Board member. We have also received active support from another Jerusalemite, Roni Ben Efrat, editor of *Challenge Magazine*.

We have held hundreds of lectures and scores of commemorations in Boston, Rochester, Burlington, Washington, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Atlanta, London, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Melbourne, and Kuala Lumpur. Our most-polished have been five commemorations in London under the auspices of our UK Director and Holocaust revisionist Paul Eisen, and a team of Palestinians, Jews, and others working with him. In April 2005 our largest of four London events took place in St. Johns Wood Church.

Dr. Alijah Gordon, whose institute contributed the beautiful painting used for the cover of our first book, hosted two commemorations in Kuala Lumpur, one featuring Israel Shamir and the other Adam Shapiro of the International Solidarity Movement. In 2005 we hosted Uri Davis lectures in Malaysia and in Australia. Bob Green, a distant relative of Ben-Gurion and a current Board member, has hosted several DYR events in Burlington. Reverend Nicholas Frayling choreographed a beautiful Deir Yassin remembrance at the famous Chichester Cathedral. Brian Filling has led Deir Yassin commemorations every year in Glasgow. And the list goes on and on. But the most valuable and most generous member of *Deir Yassin Remembered* was a Palestinian friend of mine, Issam Nashashibi.

Issam Nashashibi

Born in Jerusalem, caught outside of the country in 1967 and not allowed to return, Issam was a staunch advocate of Palestinian human rights in many different ways. We met at an American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee conference in Washington. We immediately bonded and worked together on *Deir Yassin Remembered* virtually every day until his premature death on 28 August 2003.

When Issam took his father on a last visit to see Jerusalem, I was privileged to go with them. That trip opened many new contacts for *Deir Yassin Remembered* and paved the way for subsequent trips to the IDF archives for information on Deir Yassin that had not yet been disclosed. Although by then rather old and frail, Issam's father, Mufid, was an activist at heart; he and his extensive collection of books meant that we now had a veritable reference librarian on board. A year before his death in 1999 Mufid Nashashibi insisted on being a part of the DYR vigil in front of the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles. Mufid held the placard to remember Deir Yassin, while Issam held him up. A Palestinian father and son, together in front of the Holocaust museum with a sign calling for people to remember Deir Yassin, would be the very definition of the Arabic word *sumud*, which in English might be called 'steadfastness and resilience.'

For this first Deir Yassin memorial in the United States, it was Issam Nashashibi who set the bar for major donors at \$5,000 and it was Issam and his wife, Margaret, who made the first contribution. In his best street talk, Issam would say, 'This is America, man. Justice does not come from above. *You want justice? You got to be willing to pay for it.*'

Justice—Issam paid for it and he lobbied for it. He worked on congressional campaigns in several different states and frequently attended fundraisers for members of Congress. He never stopped urging people, especially Arab Americans, to register and to exercise their right to vote.

Issam worked with *Deir Yassin Remembered* and for other Palestinian human rights projects all over the world. He had lived in London, Chapel Hill, Washington, New York, Malaysia, Puerto Rico, San Diego, San Jose, and (finally) Dawsonville, Georgia. But in his heart he always was a Palestinian from Jerusalem. In many ways he is like the olive tree, torn from its roots by violence in the Holy Land, yet clinging to the earth and to the people from whence he came.

The First Deir Yassin Memorial in the United States

When Paul Eisen, Issam and I met in London in April (2003), it was like three brothers at a family reunion. It was Paul's third theatrical Deir Yassin commemoration at the Peacock Theatre; each one had been a monumental effort prepared over several months by Paul, Janet St. John-Austin, and a couple of others. Issam and I were there to help in any way possible. But while we were busy with the current event, we were also planning for the future.

Paul wanted to produce a CD of songs involving Deir Yassin, some of which we had collected, and some of which had been created for us. Janet had used the poetry of Randa Hamwi Duwaji in the commemoration and now wanted to encourage Randa to expand this into a book of poetry solely on Deir Yassin. Issam wanted to approach foundations and apply for grants to fund our new projects and to prepare for a design competition for a large memorial and information center at Deir Yassin.

I introduced the idea of a new website, RighteousJews.org, to tap into the political benefits generated by its counterpart, Righteous Gentiles (aka Righteous Among Nations) at Yad Vashem. At first Paul and Issam did not like this idea, but later they agreed to it after the hearty endorsement by Marc Ellis who had attended the London commemoration as a featured speaker. Salma Khadra Jayyusi was our other featured speaker and she too was very enthusiastic about the new website, but counseled us not to make it a part of *Deir Yassin Remembered*, not because it didn't 'fit', but because it would dilute our single-purpose objective of building a memorial at Deir Yassin. We agreed, and Bob Green and I became the moderators of the RighteousJews.org website and list. [\[2\]](#)

Back at the Methodist International Center, an adult hostel in London where Issam and I were staying, we lamented that none of us was likely to live long enough to see a suitable memorial built at Deir Yassin. After all, we had been working on this project for over eight years and had yet to see even a simple signpost at Deir Yassin indicating that it once was an Arab village. This was not just a question of Israeli intransigence; we had sent two missions to the Knesset to request a site at Deir Yassin. We had written countless letters, most of which went unanswered. It was also a question of Palestinian parsimony or a general reluctance (for a variety of reasons) to support national causes and nation-building projects such as this.

It was then that Issam asked rather hypothetically, 'There are only two memorials to the victims of Deir Yassin—a small plaque in Jerusalem at Dar al Tifl al Arabi and a small stone at Kelvingrove Museum in Glasgow; why don't we build one in the United States?' My first response was that we simply did not have the money, but Paul told us both to relax, 'If the project is right, and this one is, the money will come from somewhere.'

We talked about location and decided that Washington should be the preferred site. After all, there is a huge Holocaust memorial on the National Mall and the United States certainly has had more to do with causing the Palestinian diaspora than it did with causing the Jewish Diaspora. But this idea was soon abandoned given the current political climate, the influence of the neo-conservatives, and the overwhelming prejudice against Palestinians among the so-called Christian Right. In spite of the fact that there are 6 to 7 million Muslims in the United States (vs. 5.2 million Jews), it is as difficult to find a Muslim in Congress as it is to find one on National PUBLIC Radio. A proposal to build a monument to slain Palestinians on the National Mall would certainly open *Deir Yassin Remembered* up to attack. On the other hand it might have gotten the three of us one-way tickets to Kfar Shaul, the mental hospital now occupying the buildings of Deir Yassin. Most of the patients there suffer from the Jerusalem Syndrome, which probably comes from too much religion; many patients believe they are John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, or some other biblical character.

We thought about Patterson, New Jersey or Dearborn, Michigan where there are large Arab-American populations. These are very reasonable locations for Deir Yassin memorials and we intend to foster their being built there in the future. But for now and for expediency we chose Geneva, New York. But why Geneva? First, we already had a beautiful site, next to a four-star hotel (Geneva on the Lake) and adjacent to a fine liberal arts college (Hobart and William Smith). There would be no calls for 'balance' and no communal control over the form and message of the memorial. Second, the fact that there is only one Palestinian family in Geneva is no worse than in Glasgow, Scotland where only a handful of Palestinians reside. And it is no worse than the location of the plaque in Jerusalem, which is behind a wall and unknown to most Palestinians and virtually all tourists. Third, the site is quasi-public, so some

control could be exercised over those who might wish to demonstrate or counter-demonstrate at the site. Fourth, I live close by and could provide the necessary supervision and tools for the footers and the physical construction of a memorial.

Ideally, we would have liked to organize a well-publicized competition for the design for the Geneva memorial; we would have liked to offer a substantial prize and thereby created considerable press coverage. After hosting 30 commemorations in April however, our coffers were empty. So in the name of expediency, we decided to approach Khalil Bendib, who we knew had done the sculpture of Alex Odeh, the ADC director in Los Angeles slain in a 1985 terrorist attack perpetrated by the Jewish Defense League (JDL). In addition to being a sculptor, Khalil is a widely published political cartoonist, some of whose work has recently appeared in a book called *It Became Necessary to Destroy the Planet in Order to Save It*. Khalil Bendib's bronze work can be seen at www.studiobendib.com and his cartoons are on view at www.bendib.com.

To our great surprise (and relief) this incredibly busy and prolific artist not only welcomed a Deir Yassin Memorial Project, but he was willing to put off other projects to begin this one right away. Our only disagreement was that he did not like Issam's idea to create a bronze statue of our logo, the saber. Khalil said it would give the wrong message; the image was too combative and too intransigent. With input from Randa Hamwi Duwaji and Janet St. John-Austin we decided instead to create a sculpture of an olive tree, uprooted, but still alive and still clinging to the earth.

The olive tree has always been a symbol of peace and enlightenment. This one shows that the peace has been violated by a protracted struggle by one religion to control land owned and long-inhabited by people of three major religions and many other variants as well. The tree's tortured, angular lines illustrate the many decades of Palestinian dispossession and dehumanization that began before 1948 and continue today. The extended branches add movement and drama; they appear dead and yet are still alive. The torn roots of the displaced olive tree are wrenched from the earth, root-remnants still entrenched, clinging to the motherland.

But where would we get the money for even such a modest project? As was often the case, Issam stepped up to the plate; he and his wife would contribute \$5,000. Let others follow his example. And follow they did. The second donor was Nabil Qaddumi, who lives in Kuwait and whose father was one of the founders of the PLO. The third donor, Israel Taub, whom we had never met and who was not even a member of *Deir Yassin Remembered*, sent us \$6,000. This was exactly the type of 'righteous' gesture that highlights the coming together of Jews and Palestinians to tell the truth and acknowledge the tragic history of their shared tragedy.

The fourth donation came from Nabil's daughter, Yasmeen. This was especially heartening since it is the next generation to which the Deir Yassin memory and the duty of remembrance must be passed. The fifth donation was of particular historical significance; Yousef Asad, one of the few remaining Deir Yassin survivors, contributed \$5,000 and also helped us to cover some of the expenses for several of our Jerusalem commemorations.

The Meaning of Deir Yassin to the Future of Israel/Palestine

Regardless of those who wish to believe that Israel is a Jewish state, it is not. It is a state controlled by Jews in which half of the population that is non-Jewish has lesser rights or no rights at all. In spite of all

the nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons possessed by Israel, in spite of all the helicopter gunships, tanks, fighter planes, and bulldozers, there will never be peace as long as the dehumanization of the Palestinian population continues. No amount of American aid and intervention on behalf of the apartheid status that now prevails in Israel can break the will of the Palestinians to be treated with equal rights and equal respect.

The saber is a symbol of that resistance. Remembering Deir Yassin is a symbol of that resistance. Songs, poems, and commemorations of Deir Yassin are symbols of that resistance. So are memorials like this uprooted-olive-tree sculpture and plaque in upstate New York. Such symbols explicitly and implicitly say,

We Palestinians shall not be forgotten. Jews were victims throughout history; they suffered most under the Nazi genocide. But we are also victims of the Nazi genocide and we are victims of calculated and methodically planned ethnic cleansing and murder in the name of Zionism. For over 60 years Deir Yassin has been the most-poignant symbol of that ethnic cleansing. If Auschwitz is hallowed ground, Deir Yassin is hallowed ground as well. Jews demand that the world recognize what was done to them. We demand that the world recognize what was done to us. That is the beginning of peace and reconciliation.

Remembering Deir Yassin is for Palestinians what remembering the massacre at Kelcie is for Jews. In the words of the director of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, memorials 'help us honor the dead, enlighten the living, and pave the way for a better future for everyone.'

Remembering Deir Yassin helps us to preserve the memory of those who died there and of those who have been uprooted all over Palestine by a criminal movement to cleanse the land of the Arabs who have lived on it for centuries. Remembering Deir Yassin protects history, preserves it, and teaches the lessons of what happens when the values of civilization and humanity are flouted.

Perhaps the opposite of love is indeed indifference. If so, indifference, like hate, cannot abide peace. Remembering Deir Yassin shows that we are not indifferent to the tragic history of anyone, and that recognizing history, humanity, the right of all to be treated fairly, and their right to live in peace between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River are requisites for peace in the Middle East.

Notes:

[1] Matthew Hogan provides the best and most concise account of the Deir Yassin incident in *The Historian*, Winter 2001.

[2] The three criteria necessary for a person to be considered a 'Righteous Jew' are: (1) The candidate must consider himself or herself to be Jewish. He or she does not have to be religious. Non-practicing Jews and even atheists can be considered. (2) The candidate must have demonstrated solidarity with Palestinians as human beings, deserving of being treated equally with all other people in the lands between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River, one country with equal citizenship for all. (3) The candidate must have faced disparagement, discrimination, or even death as a consequence of his or her standing up for the rights of Palestinians.

It is not important why a 'Righteous Jew' has defended Palestinian rights or whether his

or her actions were based on friendship, altruism, religious belief, humanitarianism, or simple human decency. (Candidates may even be considered posthumously.) By these three simple criteria, Elie Wiesel and Alan Dershowitz would not be considered 'righteous' for they miserably fail (2) and (3). Nor would Israel Shamir, who would get an A+ for (2) and (3), but who fails the first criterion, because he no longer considers himself to be Jewish.

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